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Montana K-12 Schools Staff Recruitment and Retention Report

In cooperation with the Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council (CSPAC) and all Montana school districts, the Office of Public Instruction gathered information about staff recruitment and retention. In October 1999 all districts were asked on the fall report to respond to six questions about certified staff recruitment, turnover, and future need projections. The responses to the questions were provided by all 347 public school systems, six non-public accredited schools, and one state-funded school.

Summaries and discussion of each section of questions are included below. Consult the Appendix for complete tables of information.

Difficulties with Recruiting and Retaining Certified Staff – Past Five Years

Music, special education, guidance, foreign languages and library top the list as the areas where positions are most difficult to fill. Those were followed by speech pathology, math, elementary, science, vocational education, and art. Several other areas were listed but were fewer in number (see Appendix for listings).

Table 1. Hard-to-fill positions over the past five years

Number of positions	Area
104	Music
86	Special Education
78	Guidance
67	Foreign Language
60	Library
50	Speech Pathology
48	Mathematics
40	Elementary
38	Science
37	Vocational Education
24	Art

Three major reasons were identified as possible explanations for why these positions were hard to fill – part-time positions or multiple roles, low salaries and lack of benefits, and the distances and isolation of rural assignments. A reason that was a distant fourth was few applicants and the lack of qualified candidates, identified 35 times.

Table 2. Major reasons positions are hard to fill

Number times identified	Reason
174	Only part-time positions or needed multiple certifications for multiple roles
121	Low salaries and lack of benefits
109	Rural/isolation/distance issues
35	Few applicants/lack of qualified candidates

The three primary reasons for difficulty filling positions focus on issues that are more pronounced in rural districts than in the larger districts of the state, but may also be present in some of the large districts. Small classes and limited offerings of specific coursework require only part-time teachers, often impacting certain types of teaching assignments in almost any size school. Part-time positions or those that require teaching in multiple areas provide fiscal barriers for many teachers, as well as demanding a tremendous amount of preparation. Often no benefits are provided for part-time teachers, and in many rural districts, benefits are not even available for full-time teachers. School loans are due, families need to be supported, and the costs of obtaining multiple certifications add to the fiscal difficulties. It is no surprise that teachers and administrators are not attracted to isolated areas that provide few benefits and only part-time or multiple subject area positions.

Certified Staff Turnover – Past Five Years

The primary reason for certified staff turnover in the past five years was retirement. However, taking other positions ranked very close behind retirement, and non-renewed contracts and leaving the education profession also ranked high. In addition, several went back to school or took leaves. These major reasons indicate that nearly 700 certified staff left Montana education between 1995 and 2000.

Table 3. Number of certified staff positions with turnover in the past five years

Number of positions	Type of turnover
367	Retirement
295	Took another position in state
177	Took another position out of state
131	Contract not renewed/reduction in force (RIF)
95	Left the education profession
43	Back to school/Sabbatical leave

Possible motives for the turnover were also identified. The remoteness of many Montana schools and the lack of amenities and benefits dominate the reasons for turnover.

Table 4. Possible motives for certified staff turnover in the past five years

Identified	Turnover Prompted by
196	Desire for larger community – small communities/remoteness
153	Higher salary – low salaries, lack of benefits
129	Felt the need for change or for retirement
101	Family/personal reasons
41	Work overload/disillusionment
26	Cultural differences/lack of community support
25	Lack of housing

Estimated Need for Certified Staff – Next Two Years

Districts identified the coursework they would like to offer if staff recruitment were not so difficult. Districts indicated that foreign languages, music, and art are the primary areas that would be offered. Following those were vocational education, guidance/counseling, applied technology, and computer education.

Table 5. Coursework that districts would like to offer if staff recruitment were less difficult

Level	Foreign Language	Music	Art	Vocational Education	Guidance/Counseling	Applied Technology	Computer Education
Elementary	41	27	20	1	10	6	8
Middle Grades	37	9	6	7	4	5	3
High School	29	12	7	12	3	5	4
Total	107	48	33	20	17	16	15

In the next two years, school districts estimate the greatest need for new certified staff will be for elementary teachers - approximately 150 per year. Although that number appears high, it represents only about 4 percent of the total number of elementary teachers. The next highest need is for special education teachers - 40 per year (about 5 percent of the total), guidance - 32 per year (about 8 percent of the total), principals – 30 a year (about 6 percent of the total), music – 26 a year (about 6 percent of the total), and superintendents – 25 per year (about 15 percent of the total).

When the figures for needed positions are compared with the numbers of the most difficult to fill positions, some future hiring difficulties can be easily identified. However, some potentially hard-to-fill areas may not be identified in this survey. School board and school administrative organizations have indicated that it is becoming more and more difficult to recruit qualified candidates for principal and superintendent positions.

Table 6. Relationship of needed positions to hard-to-fill positions

Teaching positions	Expected to be needed		Hard to fill		Hard to fill
	2 years (1 year)		5 years	(1 year)	Over next 2 years
Music	52	(26)	104	(21)	*all
Special Education	80	(40)	86	(17)	one-half
Guidance/counseling	63	(32)	78	(16)	*one-half
Foreign Language	40	(20)	67	(13)	*one-half
Library	42	(21)	60	(12)	one-half
Mathematics	43	(22)	48	(10)	one-half
Elementary	296	(148)	40	(8)	adequate
Science	43	(21)	38	(8)	one-third
Vocational Education	30	(15)	37	(7)	*one-half
Art	22	(11)	24	(5)	*one-half
Applied Technology	11	(6)	20	(4)	all
Administrators/specialists					
Speech Pathology	22	(11)	50	(10)	all
Principal	58	(29)	19	(4)	one-seventh
Superintendent	49	(25)	8	(2)	**high turnover
Curric/Assess Directors	9	(5)	0	(0)	adequate
Program Coordinators	7	(4)	3	(1)	adequate

*would be even more difficult to fill if districts could offer courses they would like to offer

**high portion of total - will probably be few available candidates

Music, applied technology, and speech pathology are areas where the number of annually needed positions for the next two years are about the same as the number of difficult to fill positions in the past five years. Those areas are likely to be very difficult to fill in the future. About half the positions will be difficult to fill in special education, guidance and counseling, foreign languages, library, math, vocational education, and art, and about a third of the science positions. A large number of superintendents have reached retirement age, and the anticipated turnover for superintendents is extremely high (15 percent per year). Those openings are likely to draw from a small pool of candidates.

Observations

If Montana is to recruit the certified personnel required to staff our schools of the future, strategies will need to be identified and implemented quickly to attract new teachers to our schools. Training more teachers, or lowering the requirements for teacher certification are strategies that may increase the number of certified teachers, but that strategy alone is unlikely to draw those teachers to low paying, isolated, non-benefit, multiple assignment or part-time jobs. Focusing on specific program areas (music, applied technology, speech pathology) may have some impact. However, many of the teachers we train in Montana education programs do not stay in Montana, or if they do, many do not teach in our schools. At this time it is unknown how many graduates of Montana education programs remain in Montana to teach, and how many

leave Montana for more attractive jobs in other areas. That information will be reviewed in the near future to identify the numbers and program areas of the education graduates remaining in Montana to teach.

In many states, the special education area presents a much greater recruitment problem than in Montana. It is likely that the targeted special education endorsement project has had an impact on the number of available special education teachers in Montana. The program targets already certified personnel to receive on-the-job training to prepare them to teach special education. Priority is given to the most rural schools. Stipends are provided to the teachers, who are already vested in their communities and schools, and the post-secondary programs providing the training and supervision receive assistance with the costs of managing and conducting the training.

Broad statewide strategies will need to be identified to overcome the barriers of lack of benefits, rural /isolation, and the part-time and multiple assignments. Many states need trained teachers, and most states pay considerably more than Montana to obtain those teachers. In many states and districts, beginning teachers have the opportunity to participate in mentoring programs with experienced teachers, obtain support to pay off college loans, receive generous benefits, and may be given signing bonuses and assistance with housing. The teacher retirement programs in many other states provide benefits that encourage teachers to stay in that program and retire with dignity instead of struggling to survive on half a salary and pay for health insurance.

Montana has many strengths upon which to depend. Our schools and classes are reasonably small. A variety of standardized tests indicate that our students are among the best in the nation. And most Montana residents really want to live in this wonderful place. Our young people leave Montana because they need to find jobs that pay a living wage and utilize their skills and training. Many of them have returned to the state when they have children in school, because Montana still feels like a relatively safe and sane place to raise and educate children. But if we can't attract qualified staff to teach in the schools, Montana will lose a major attraction for coming home.

Prepared by Dori Nielson, Ed. D.

APPENDIX

This data was gathered by the Office of Public Instruction from the fall report for school year 1999-2000. Reports were received from 354 School Systems with accredited schools, including 347 public school systems, 6 non-public accredited schools and 1 state-funded school.

Question 1. Positions hard to fill past 5 years. Question 2. Reasons positions were hard to fill.

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>AREA</u>	
104	Music	174 <u>ONLY PART-TIME OR NEEDED MULTIPLE CERTIFICATIONS/SKILLS</u>
86	Special Education	91 Only part-time positions
78	Guidance	76 Need candidates with multiple degrees/certifications/assignments
67	Foreign Language	Above concern - cited library/cnslr/music/art positions
60	Library	7 Multiple grade rooms
50	Speech	121 <u>LOW SALARIES/LACK OF BENEFITS</u>
48	Math	115 Low salaries/few raises - out-of-state salaries higher
40	Elementary	6 Lack of benefits
38	Science	109 <u>RURAL/ISOLATION/TRAVEL</u>
37	Vocational Ed	86 Isolation/distances - rural, small town
24	Art	14 Limited housing
20	Applied Technology	9 Itinerant - travel required
19	Principal	35 <u>LACK OF QUALIFIED CANDIDATES</u>
17	Business	17 No or few applicants
16	Psychologist	18 Lack of qualified candidates - not trained in areas of need
13	Computer Education	12 <u>FINANCIAL</u>
11	English	9 Budgets cannot support all accreditation standards
8	Superintendent	1 Grant funding
5	Health Education	1 High cost of living
3	Gifted & Talented	1 Poor facilities
3	Program Coordinators	4 <u>STRESS</u>
2	Social Science	2 High stress level
28	Other	1 Excessive paperwork
		1 Heavy administrative responsibilities
		4 <u>COMMUNITY</u>
		2 Cultural differences
		2 Poor community support of schools
		8 <u>OTHER</u>
		3 Husband/wife both want employment opportunity
		3 Competition for talent, private sector
		2 Easy to break contracts
		1 Mean Superintendent
		80 <u>NO DIFFICULTY</u>
		21 Indicated no difficulty
		59 Marked no areas as hard to fill

Question 3. Primary reason for certified staff turnover. Question 4. Identified motives for the turnover.

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>TYPE OF TURNOVER</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>MOTIVES FOR TURNOVER</u>
367	Retirement	196	Small town/remote - desire for larger community
295	Another position in-state	153	Higher salary, lack of benefits
177	Another position out-of-state	129	Time for change or retirement
131	Contract not renewed/reductions (RIF)	101	Family/personal reasons
95	Left education profession	41	Work overload/disillusioned
43	Went back to school/sabbatical leave	26	Cultural differences/lack of community support
		25	Lack of housing
			OTHER MOTIVES
		9	Other opportunities
		9	Budget limits/levy failure/enr decline
		8	Incompetence/immorality
		1	Poor administrators

OTHER COMMENTS: out-of-state pull for administrators because of TRS issues
teachers already hired in other states before local interviews can be scheduled

Question 5. If Staff Recruitment were Not Too Difficult, Would Like to Offer Course in the Following Areas:

Level	Foreign Lang	Music	Art	Voc Ed	Guidance/ Cnsl	Applied Tech	Computer Ed	Library	Math
Elementary	41	27	20	1	10	6	8	8	
Middle Grades	37	9	6	7	4	5	3	2	1
High School	29	12	7	12	3	5	4	1	6
	107	48	33	20	17	16	15	11	7

Level	Science	G&T/ Adv PI	Health Enhance	Speech Path	Elem	Business	Spec Ed	Other (no desc)
Elementary								
Middle Grades	2	1	2	1	3			3
High School		2	1	1		1		6
	4	3	1	1		2	3	10
	6	6	4	3	3	3	3	19

Question 6. Estimate of the number of certified staff positions anticipated to be filled over the next 2 years.

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>POSITION/AREA</u>
296	Elementary
80	Special Education
63	Guidance/Counseling
58	Principal
52	Music
49	Superintendent
45	English
43	Math
42	Librarian (3 part-time)
42	Science
40	Foreign Language
30	Health Enhancement
30	Vocational Education
28	Business
22	Art
22	Speech
22	Social Studies
19	Computer Education
15	Psychologist
11	Applied Technology
10	Gifted/Talented, Advanced Placement
9	Curriculum/Assessment Coordinators
7	Program Coordinator/Special Education Directors
	OTHER AREAS
67	Not Described

If Staff Recruitment were Not Too Difficult, Would Like to Offer Course in the Following Areas:

ELEMENTARY

27 Music
20 Art
41 Foreign Language
8 Computer Ed
6 Applied Technology
10 Guidance
3 Elementary
2 Health Enhancement
2 Science
1 Voc Ed
8 Librarian
1 Speech Path

1 Gifted & Talented

3 Other (no description)

MIDDLE

9 Music
6 Art
37 Foreign Language
3 Computer Ed
5 Applied Technology
4 Guidance

1 Health Enhancement

7 Voc Ed
2 Librarian
1 Speech Path
1 Math
1 Business

2 Gifted & Talented

6 Other (no description)